

SOME OF MY FAVORITE “SURE FIRE HITS” FROM
THE SUMMER 2011 CHARTER SEASON

As this summer ends, looking back, it was one of wonderful blue skies and fluffy white cloud filled days, tranquil seas, much laughter, MANY new acquaintances, nice reunions with old ones and yes, a few culinary challenges.... "Soldiers & Softies" chief among them haha.

As ever faced with what to make, with what I find, where I find it....
The recipes that follow are some of what came out of this summer's culinary adventures.

I hope you will try some of these recipes yourself and most of all, have fun and ENJOY!

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Fattoush salad typically combines summer veggies, a whack-load of fresh herbs, fried pita bread, and za'atar – a sesame and sumac-based topping that gives fattoush its distinctive zingy flavor. As a dish it is totally fresh and satisfying, perfect for a light, summer afternoon lunch, but can easily be made into a meal with the addition of chickpeas or beans, and maybe a few olives thrown in for good measure. I would liken fattoush to Greek salad, but the thing that really sets it apart is the za'atar – almost like a magical genie-in-a-bottle!

Fattoush Salad

2 medium cucumbers, with skin
3 cups chopped tomatoes (I used a combination of cherry, plum, and grape tomatoes)
2 red bell peppers
1 large red onion
3 green onions
1 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
¾ cup chopped mint
raw flax crackers, flatbread, or toasted pita

Wash, prepare, and chop all veggies into bite-sized pieces. Wash, spin-dry herbs and chop. Place in a large bowl. Pour dressing over salad, stir, and let stand for at least 30 minutes at room temperature to allow the flavors to meld. Right before serving, sprinkle generously with za'atar, crumble raw flax crackers and fold into salad. Enjoy.

Fattoush Salad Dressing

¼ cup extra virgin cold-pressed olive oil
¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
zest of 1 lemon (organic, un-waxed if possible!)
1 tsp. raw liquid honey or maple syrup
2 – 4 cloves garlic, minced
a couple pinches of sea salt
a pinch of black pepper

Put all ingredients in a jar with a light-fitting lid and shake.

Za'atar:

NOTE: You can make a raw version of this amazing topping by using raw sesame seeds. But to really bring out the awesome nutty flavor in these little guys... lightly toast the sesame seeds in a dry skillet over medium-high heat until they start to pop and brown a bit. Remove from heat and let cool.

Ingredients:

¼ cup sesame seeds (raw or toasted)
¼ cup sumac
2 Tbsp. dried thyme
1 Tbsp. dried oregano
(This is a good “starter amount”, but feel free to double, triple, quadruple the recipe if you want more za'atar!)

Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Funnel into a glass jar and store in a cool, dark place.



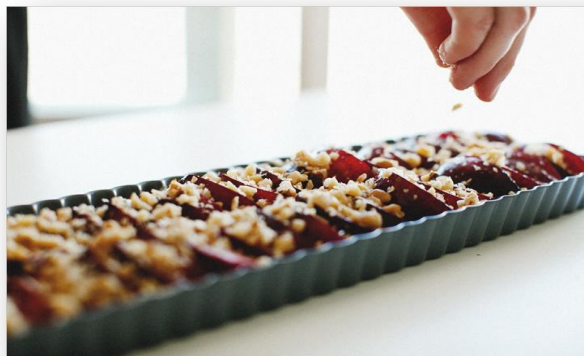
Za'atar – A Flavor Genie in a Bottle!

After making my own za'atar, I've come to regard it as a real flavor booster for just about any dish! My favorite so far is sprinkling it on an avocado sandwich, but it's also lovely with eggs, dashed on hummus, steamed brown rice with veggies... Throw it on your next meal and see how za'atar wakes it up!

PLUM TART WITH MASCARPONE CREAM



I had been envisioning this tart for a while now, the crust is great, with a nice crunch of cornmeal, and not so much butter that you feel a bit of guilt with each bite. The plums are sweet, barely tart, with some nice texture from not being cooked much at all. Then there is the filling, which may have turned out a bit gooey on first run (I made changes below, don't fret!), but it still tasted quite nice.



PLUM TART WITH MASCARPONE CREAM

1/2 Cup Cornmeal
1 Cup White Whole Wheat Flour
1 Tbsp. Natural Cane Sugar
1/2 tsp. Sea Salt
4 Tbsp. Cold Butter or Coconut Oil
2-3 Tbsp. Ice Cold Water
4 Ripe Plums
1 Tbsp. Cointreau Liquor
Bit of Orange Zest
1/2 Cup Mascarpone, room temperature
2 Tbsp. Muscavado or Brown Sugar

1/4 Cup Walnuts
2 Tbsp. Turbinado Sugar



The crust can be done in a processor, or by hand with a pastry cutter. For the processor, put all the dry ingredients in the bowl and give them a quick pulse to combine. Cut the cold butter into cubes, add it to the processor and give it a few more pulses so there are little pea size flecks of butter.

Add the cold water, 1 Tbsp. at a time, until the crust just begins to hold together (Alternatively, you can cut the butter into the flour mix with a pastry cutter, and add the water 1 Tbsp. at a time as well).

Press the dough in an even layer, into a 11x5 rectangular tart pan and put it in the fridge to chill for at least 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 400'. Bake the crust on the middle rack for 20-25 minutes until golden on the edges, remove to cool.

While the crust cools, cut the plum into thin slices and gently toss it in the tequila. In another bowl, mix the mascarpone with the honey. Chop up the walnuts pretty fine (OK you can use the processor, but I REALLY hate washing that thing), mix them in a bowl with the Turbinado.

Set the oven to 475'. On the cool crust, spread the mascarpone cream, drain the plums if needed then layer them nicely on top of the mascarpone. Lastly, sprinkle the walnut Turbinado mix across the top. With a rack in the upper third, bake it another 5 minutes just to toast the top. Put it back in the fridge to cool and set the cream. Eat it!

ROASTED TOMATO SOUP

Serves 2 as an entree, or 4 as a side/first course
(I was serving 10p + 6 crew so increased below amounts proportionally)



I started thinking about this, because we had a guest on board who did not care for raw tomatoes...and of course I had just purchased baskets of them.

NOTE: This soup, while easy in preparation and simple in ingredients, is REALLY only as good as the tomatoes you use (pay attention, did you catch the life metaphor there?).

If you have a local farmer's market, roadside farm stand or grow your own, this is the time to use them. Regardless of them being roasted, the integrity of the tomato stands out. I thought it would be good with some homemade pesto croutons, or some smoked paprika if you want a bit of heat, but it's just as comforting with a slice of crusty bread.

Because it was summer and I prefer things lighter, though I list it here, I honestly did not add any cream. This is your choice. It will take an edge off of the acidity, but I thought a little cheese crostini balanced it out just fine. **NOTE:** Try a dollop of (thinned with water) FAGE Greek Yogurt as a substitute for the cream

1 1/4 lb. Ripe Tomatoes (about 4 Large Tomatoes)
1/2 Medium Yellow Onion
3 Garlic Cloves
1 Tbsp. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 tsp. Sea Salt
Fresh Ground Pepper
1 Tbsp. Chopped Parsley
1 1/2 Cups Low Sodium Vegetable or Chicken Broth
1 Tbsp. Organic Tomato Paste
1/4 Cup Heavy Cream or Half and Half, optional

Fresh Oregano + Basil for garnish
Fresh Grainy Artisan Bread
Mozzarella Cheese



Preheat the oven to 350'. Cut the tomatoes and the half of an onion into wedges. Use your finger to push out some of the seedy parts of the tomatoes, but this is not a huge deal, just get out the big seedy parts, a bit intact is fine. Spread them on a rimmed baking sheet.

Drizzle with the olive oil and sprinkle the salt, a generous amount of pepper, the chopped parsley and gently toss it with your hands. Tuck the garlic cloves somewhere in a tomato, so they don't burn. Roast on the middle rack for 30-40 minutes until the tomatoes have broken down and reduced to about half their size. Remove and cool slightly.

Warm the broth and stir in the tomato paste to dissolve. Add the all of the ingredients from the roasting pan into the broth and let it gently simmer for 5-10 minutes. Use an immersion blender to puree the soup

in the bowl, or with a food processor or blender. The soup should be smooth, with some texture. If you don't like any texture at all, you could run it through a fine mesh sieve.

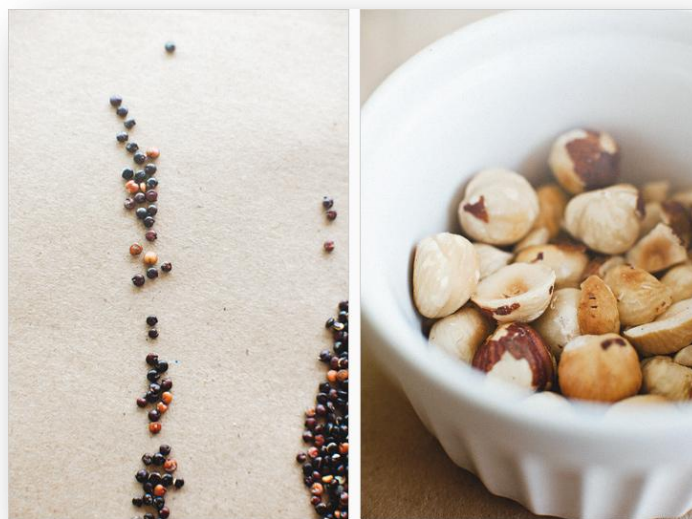
Return it back to the pot, and add the cream to taste, if using. Taste for salt and pepper. Serve with some toasted bread, or broil a few slices with a piece of mozzarella on top. Garnish with fresh chopped basil and oregano.

GREEN BEAN + BLACK QUINOA SALAD



Here is another concoction derived from what was “On-Hand”....

The green beans stay crisp from a quick blanch, and the quinoa adds a bit of protein to fill you up. If you like your salads to be a little easier to eat, simply chop up those lanky beans to bite size pieces. Ignore the oven and have a tasty salad.



GREEN BEAN + BLACK QUINOA SALAD / Serves 4-6

I made my dressing with a lemon infused olive oil because I had some and I am obsessed with it, but it is not necessary. Use that if you have it, and if you'd like a bit of citrus, add a bit of fresh lemon zest when tossing everything together.

Dressing

1/4 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
3 Tbsp. White Balsamic
2 tsp. Agave Nectar / Honey
1 Clove Garlic
Handful of Basil Leaves
Pinch of Salt + Pepper
1/2 Cup Quinoa (black or red is pretty, but any color works)
1 lb. Green Beans, ends trimmed
2 Scallions/Green Onions
1/2 Cup Hazelnuts, toasted and skins removed, roughly chopped

In a blender or food processor, whirl all of the dressing ingredients together. Taste for salt and pepper and set aside in the fridge.

Bring 1 Cup water to a boil and add the quinoa, turn the heat down to a simmer, cover and cook for about 20 minutes or until all the liquid is absorbed. Transfer quinoa to a large mixing bowl to cool.

Blanch or steam the green beans until just barely softened. Drain well. Add the drained green beans to the cooled quinoa. Thinly slice the scallions and add them, and half of the chopped hazelnuts to the bowl and toss with desired amount of the dressing. Finish the salad with a few grinds of fresh black pepper and the rest of the hazelnuts. Serve at room temperature or chill in the fridge. The leftovers hold up great.

SWEET CORN CEVICHE



Yes, it is just around the corner when people will start talking pumpkin and apples and the holiday Starbucks cup...but, I still need to go for another swim in the ocean, have a beach picnic and make popsicles! Call me crazy but, I want to enjoy the corn and tomatoes and peaches a bit longer.

OK as simple this recipe is, it needs some defense in case you are thinking it looks too basic. First off, I had such an abundance of fresh corn this summer....seemed everyone who came to visit brought a bag full, after I had just purchased TWO bags full (haha)

It's the end of August/September now, and if there is ever a time to find sweet, creamy corn from a farm stand or farmers market, it is now. NOTE: I've watched enough documentaries on the food system to make the effort for organic corn, and besides the ethics of it, the flavor and texture is completely different.

Now for the recipe...which was just a truly on the spot creation. The raw corn kernels marinate and soften up a bit, absorbing all the flavor (hence 'ceviche'). You could very well eat this as a side salad, in a quesadilla, mix it with a bit of queso fresco and use it as a condiment for whatever you're BBQ-ing.

The finely chopped serrano brings the perfect amount of heat, enough to warm up your mouth but not send you searching for a drink. I know I already said this about the [tomato soup](#), but I mean it, this recipe is only as good as the ingredients you use. It is raw corn after all.



SWEET CORN CEVICHE / Makes 2 Cups

NOTE: I paid attention to chop the other ingredients pretty small, as I wanted the corn to be the star, and the rest to merely compliment – I really think this made a difference.

2 Farmstand Corn Cobs

Zest and Juice of one Lime

1 Generous Tbsp. Extra Virgin Olive Oil (use the good stuff)

1 Green Onion, finely chopped

1 Serrano Chile, seeded and minced

1/4 Cup Chopped Cilantro*

1/4 tsp. Sea Salt



Shuck the corn and use a sharp knife to cut off the corn kernels from all sides. Put them in a mixing bowl. Add the zest and juice of the lime, good olive oil, green onion, serrano and stir to coat. Add the cilantro and sea salt and give it another stir. Let it sit for at least 30 minutes before eating for the flavors to blend. Taste for salt. Keep in a covered container in the fridge, it gets slightly more spicy with age.



* I know there are people who despise cilantro, but don't let that deter you from making this. You could substitute 2 Tbsp. finely chopped, fresh oregano leaves. It won't be quite as 'Mexican' tasting, but it does need a fresh herb, and this is the second best option.

GINGER CAKES WITH WHITE PEACHES + BLACKBERRY COULIS



I feel really good about this dessert. In fact I will claim it as my current SUMMER favorite...

It is a zesty ginger angel food cake of sorts, with the tang of fresh blackberries and the warm sweetness of a ripe, white peach. It's not that any of the three components are show stoppers on their own, but together, the combination is absolute perfection.

NOTE: This dessert is a case in point, that heavy and rich is not always better. If I were serving this to other people, I would consider adding a very small scoop of good vanilla bean ice cream on top. However, for the sunny days of August, where it was just me needing an afternoon treat, they are perfect as is.

GINGER CAKES WITH WHITE PEACHES + BLACKBERRY COULIS // Makes 4 Small Cakes

NOTE: Egg whites are easier to beat when they sit at room temperature for a bit. As far as substitutes, you could use regular white sugar instead of what is listed below if that is what you bake with, and have on hand. I imagine they could be made gluten free with rice flour or a gluten free baking mix, but I haven't tested that myself.

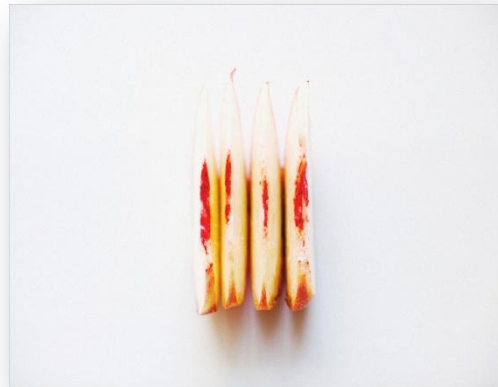
I like a lot of ginger, and found the below measurement to be pretty modest. If you make them, I'd love to hear your feedback on the ratio! Next time I might use 3-4 Tbsp.

3 Extra Large Egg Whites (4 if any smaller)
1/2 tsp. Cream of Tartar
Pinch of Salt
1/4 Cup Natural Cane Sugar/Sucanat
1/4 Scant Cup Turbinado Sugar
1 tsp. Real Vanilla Extract
2 Tbsp. Fresh Grated Ginger
1/4 Cup Unbleached All Purpose Flour
1 Ripe, Organic White Peach
1 1/4 Cup Blackberries
Juice of one Lime, about 2 Tbsp.
1 Tbsp. Honey
1 Tbsp. Half & Half/Heavy Cream

Preheat Oven to 350' degrees. In a mixing bowl, beat the egg whites, cream of tartar and salt with a hand mixer on high until peaks form (about 3 minutes). They should quadruple in size. Once it's holding shape, continue beating it, while slowly sprinkling in the sugars.

Beat in the vanilla extract and fresh grated ginger. Using a rubber spatula, sprinkle and fold in the 1/4 flour, being careful not to deflate the egg whites.

Coat four, 4-6 oz. ramekins with natural cooking spray, gently divide cake mix between them. Place ramekins on a baking sheet, and put in the oven on the middle rack. Bake for 14 minutes. Allow them to cool about 5 minutes, then remove them from the ramekin. * I give mine a good slam down on a cutting board, and flip them over, the cake comes right out.





While the cakes are cooking, blend the blackberries, lime juice, honey and splash of cream together. Taste for sweetness, as the quality/ripeness of the berries may require you to add a tad more honey but I feel , it should be tart. Cut the peach in half, and in thin slices (see photo above).

Assemble with one cake, a few spoonfuls of the blackberry sauce and some fresh peach slices.

RUSTIC FIG AND GOAT CHEESE PIZZA



So many I know of are intimidated to make their own pizza dough....

It only has a quick list of about 4 stand by ingredients and you can reap a priceless amount of self accomplishment. The attractive thing about pizza to any cook/chef, is that it is a blank canvas for flavors.

You can use whatever cheese you have, maybe some leftover shredded chicken, marinara sauce or pesto. I wanted to wish my beloved figs a fond farewell this season, so a savory flatbread was just the place for final enjoyment.



RUSTIC FIG AND GOAT CHEESE PIZZA // Makes 2 large, or 4 small pizzas

Dough #1

2 Cups Unbleached Flour
1 Cup Whole Wheat Flour
1 to 1 1/4 Cup Water
1 tsp./ Half Packet Quick Rise Yeast
2 tbsp. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
2 tsp. Sea Salt
3 tbsp. Fresh Chopped Chives

or

Basic Dough #2

1 package active dry yeast
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
2/3 cup warm water (105 to 115°F.)
1 2/3 cups unbleached, all-purpose flour
3/4 teaspoons table salt
3/4 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

NOTE: you can add all manner of grains and seeds to these dough's i.e., Sunflower, Toasted wheat berries etc

This is my favorite way to do it using a Cuisinart food processor:

In a 2-cup liquid measure, dissolve yeast and sugar in warm water. Let stand until foamy, about 3 to 5 minutes. Insert dough blade in work bowl and add flour and salt. Or follow instructions for using quick rise yeast **NOTE:** I also like to use the RED STAR Bulk yeast from Costco.

With machine running using bread blade, pour liquid through small feed tube as fast as flour absorbs it. Process until dough cleans sides of work bowl and forms a ball. Then process for 30 seconds to knead dough. Dough may be slightly sticky. I add any additional seeds or grains at this time and knead till mixed through.

Coat dough evenly with olive oil; transfer to a plastic food storage bag and seal the top. Let rise in a warm place for about 45 minutes. Or you can oil dough as directed and place in an oiled bowl and cover with cling wrap. Place dough on a lightly floured surface and punch down. Roll into desired crust sizes and place on baking pans lightly sprayed with vegetable oil cooking spray. Follow with a pizza recipe. Makes two 7" or one 14"

Topping Goodies

12 Fresh Figs, Sliced
½ Cup Soft Goat Cheese
½ Cup Fresh Shaved Parmesan Reggiano
¼ Cup Red Onion, VERY thinly sliced
¼ Cup Fresh Chives
2 Cups Organic Mache (Lambs Lettuce)
2 tbsp. Balsamic Vinegar
1 tsp. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Sea Salt and Fresh Ground Pepper



Make the dough according to instructions. Please note for Dough #1 I used 2 Cups Unbleached Flour and 1 Cup Whole Wheat Flour which provided both a chewy and crispy texture when pulled thin enough, I also added fresh chives for a bit of color and zing.

This needs to be done 2 hrs. in advance. Once you've made your dough, divide it and pull it out to desired size. With your hands, rub a little bit of oil on one side, and put the oiled side down on the grill. Close the lid and grill for about 3 minutes. Flip the dough over and push the dough down with a spatula to create a thinner flatbread (if you desire... I desired).

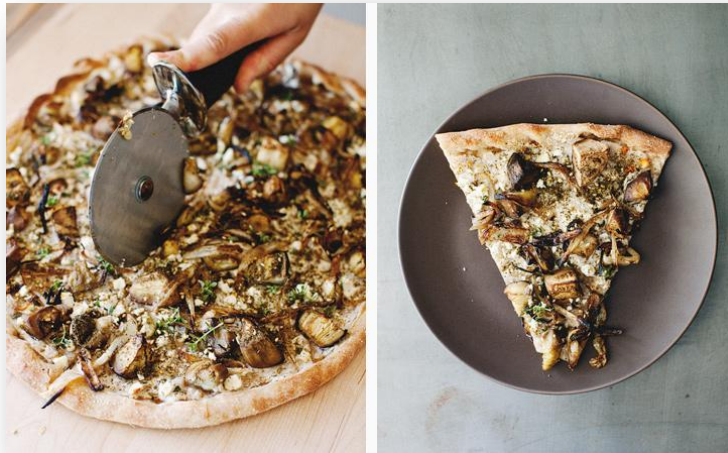
Evenly distribute the sliced figs, goat cheese, parmesan, chives and sliced red onion across the dough. Give it all a generous grind of pepper and sprinkle of salt.

Turn oven to 450 degrees, **NOTE:** I set my sheet pan in the oven about ten minutes before hand so the dough bottom is set on a hot surface then bake for 10- 15 minutes until cheese melts and topping are cooked. THE BEST way is to preheat a sheet pan with the wire cooling rack (cooling cookies etc) as this allows for air circulation to cook bottom crust...anyway EXPERIMENT

GRILLED: Turn your grill to medium high heat. Close the lid and grill for another 6 to 8 minutes until all toppings are melted and there are grill marks on the bottom of the dough.

In the meantime, toss the mache lettuce with the balsamic vinegar, olive oil and sprinkle of salt and pepper. Remove the flatbreads and top with a hefty handful of the dressed Mache. Chomp away while its hot!

ROASTED EGGPLANT + ZA'ATAR PIZZA



The thought of this combination had me quite excited yesterday, a little something different to throw on on your pizza. I'm fairly new to using za'atar, and have come to love its unique acidity from the sumac, the ever familiar dried thyme and a bit of nutty crunch from the sesame seeds.

NOTE: You can buy it at spice shops, online, middle eastern grocery stores or here is my stab at a recipe to make your own. It's seriously great on top of hummus, used in a marinade, on grilled vegetables, etc.

ROASTED EGGPLANT + ZA'ATAR PIZZA // Serves 2-4

I give cheese measurements, but you can use your discretion depending on how you like your pizza, and how many vegetables you throw on there. **NOTE:** The melty cheese is necessary in combination with the feta. The feta provides saltiness and flavor, but the mozzarella makes it a pizza. I've given directions for baking, but you could just as easily do this on the grill as shown below, if you don't want to turn on the oven. You can alternatively sauté the eggplants, instead of roasting.

Tahini Spread

3 Tbsp. Tahini
1 Tbsp. Lemon Juice
1 Clove Garlic, minced
Pinch of Salt + Pepper

1 Eggplant
2 tsp. Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Generous Pinch of Dried Oregano
1 Small Yellow Onion, halved and sliced

Pizza Dough from above **NOTE:** You can also buy a fresh dough ball from your local pizza place for or food market now for convenience)

3/4 Cup Shredded Mozzarella
1 Tbsp. Za'atar (SEE recipe ABOVE with Fattoush Salad)
1/3 Cup Crumbled Feta
Fresh Thyme Leaves
Salt + Pepper

Preheat the oven to 450'. Mix all of the Tahini spread ingredients together in a bowl, set aside. Peel the eggplant (doesn't have to be perfect) and cut it in to small pieces. Drizzle it with the olive oil, generous

pinch of salt and dried oregano. Toss to coat. Spread it on a baking sheet and roast it for 15-20 minutes. **Note:** you could also throw the onions on there to streamline the recipes, but I like to do it in a cast iron skillet to really char those babies.



To char the onions, heat a pan over medium high heat with a dash of oil (I like to use cast iron here), add the onions and char them for about 10-15 minutes, tossing them around occasionally. The point is to cook them on high heat, without a lot of moisture, to char the sides, as opposed to caramelizing them.

Roll out your crust and put it on a floured/cornmeal sprinkled baking sheet. Spread the Tahini spread across the surface, sprinkle the mozzarella, the eggplant chunks and charred onions, the za'atar, and the crumbled feta. Drizzle a bit of olive oil on top, and baking the pizza for 12-15 minutes until the edges crisp up. Garnish the top with a generous sprinkle of the fresh thyme leaves.



ENJOY!!